

Utetheisa pulchella (LINNAEUS, 1758) (Lepidoptera, Erebidae, Arctiinae) found again in Romania after more than 100 years

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Summary: *Utetheisa pulchella* (LINNAEUS, 1758) was recent reported from Romania based on a few specimens collected in the southern Dobrogea (Constanța county). These are the first records from Romania in over 100 years and the first reports for Dobrogea. Some aspects regarding the presence of this species in Romania are clarified.

Rezumat: *Utetheisa pulchella* (LINNAEUS, 1758) a fost semnalată recent în fauna României pe baza câtorva exemplare colectate în sudul Dobrogei (județul Constanța). Acestea sunt primele semnalări din România în peste 100 de ani și primele semnalări pentru Dobrogea. Sunt clarificate unele aspecte privind prezența acestei specii în România.

Key words: *Utetheisa pulchella*, Dobrogea, Romania.

Introduction

Utetheisa pulchella (LINNAEUS, 1758) is most common in the tropical and subtropical areas of Africa and Asia. However, it is only present in a few regions of the European continent, such as in the coastal areas of the Mediterranean (Southern Spain, the Balearic Islands, Sardinia, Corsica, Sicily, the southern Greek islands such as Crete and Cyprus) (BOURAS *et al.* 2018, CAMPBELL 2011, DANDRIA 1990, NIMMERFROH 2013, PANDEY and NATH 1975, VIERA 2012). It is also present in the archipelagoes of the Canaries and Madeira. It mainly prefers coastal dunes, rocky areas, dry slopes and other warm habitats with lacunar vegetation. In migration, this species is also found in other types of habitats, such as steppe mosaic areas with agricultural land and forest edges (http://www.pyrgus.de/Utetheisa_pulchella_en.html).

U. pulchella usually migrates northwards in fairly low numbers and has occasionally been reported north of the Alps in Germany, northern France, the British Isles and as far north as Denmark and Sweden (PALMQVIST and RYRHOLM 2020). In the 21st century, over 120 new discoveries have been recorded in the UK (RANDLE *et al.* 2019). Due mainly to climate changes, but also to the expansion of urbanization and the transformation of lands with spontaneous vegetation into agricultural lands, which has led to the reduction of food sources, we are witnessing in the last decades an expansion to the north of some species and/or changes in the routes of their migration (SZÉKELY 2022).

In this context *U. pulchella* can be taken into discussion as it has been sighted in Romania after almost 100 years.

Examined material

1♀, 28.X.2022, Dobromir, Constanța county, southern Dobrogea (43.9752°N, 27.7968°E), (leg. Viorel C. Olteanu) (Fig. 1).

The specimen was collected using a light trap with a 250W Hg vapor bulb, in an area with forest vegetation alternating with shrubs of *Crataegus monogyna* and *Prunus spinosa*, bordering some agricultural land (Fig. 2). The collected specimen was sighted at 22:20, the temperature of the environment being 12 °C. Among the species collected that night, we also mention: *Polymixis rufocincta* (GEYER, 1828), *Dichonia (Gripusia) aprilina* (LINNAEUS, 1758) and *Ulochlaena hirta* (HÜBNER, 1813).

Results and discussions

Previous records of *U. pulchella* in Romania are based on very old data from the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (CZEKELIUS 1897, REBEL 1911) (Fig. 3). REBEL (1911) recalls a specimen collected by Dr. Partos at Băile Herculane, later reiterated by RÁKOSY and NEUMANN (1997). CZEKELIUS (1897) publishes a report from Hunyad county (B. Rea / probably refers to the Valea Rea Waterfall in present day Hunedoara County). Several other very old data are from the Orșova - Berzasca area and the Danube Gorges (Cazanele Dunării), (KÖNIG, 1960, 1998). All old records from the territory of Romania are presented by SZÉKELY (2010). In the "Catalog of Romanian Lepidoptera", the species is cited only with data from the period 1850-1900 (RÁKOSY and GOIA 2021).



Fig. 1. *Utetheisa pulchella* (♀), Dobromir, Constanța county, southern Dobrogea, 28.X.2022: in nature (a) and mounted specimen, with scale bar: 20 mm (b).

In the region of Romania the data are somewhat similar. In Hungary, only old data from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century are also recorded (VOJNITS *et al.* 1991). Some more data comes from Bulgaria, with records from Burgas, Sliven, Plovdiv, Târnovo and Stara Zagora (GANEV 1984), and from Southern Ukraine in the Crimea, from Sevastopol, Simferopol, Feodosia, Kerchi, Eupatoria, etc. (EFETOV and BUDASHKIN 1990).

Therefore, the specimen from the Dobromir locality area, collected in October 2022, represents the first

record from the end of the 19th century to this day. The following year three other specimens were observed, one feeding on *Alyssum borzaeanum* Nyár. near Agigea (16.V.2023, leg. Alexandru Pintiloaie, pers. comm.) and two others (♂♂) in the area of Limanu Monastery (28-29.IX.2023, leg. Vlad Dincă, pers. comm.) (Fig. 3).

It was found that, as a result of climate changes, during the last two decades, certain other subtropical species entered or became apparently more frequent in the south-east regions of Romania, such



Fig. 2. Dobromir, Constanța county, southern Dobrogea, 28 October 2022 (Photo: Viorel C. Olteanu).

as *Grammodes bifasciata* (PETAGNA, 1787), *Aedia leucomelas* (LINNAEUS, 1758), *Chrysodeixis chalcites* (ESPER, 1789), *Mythimna unipuncta* (HAWORTH, 1809), *Thysanoplusia orichalcea* (FABRICIUS, 1775) etc. (SZÉKELY 2022).

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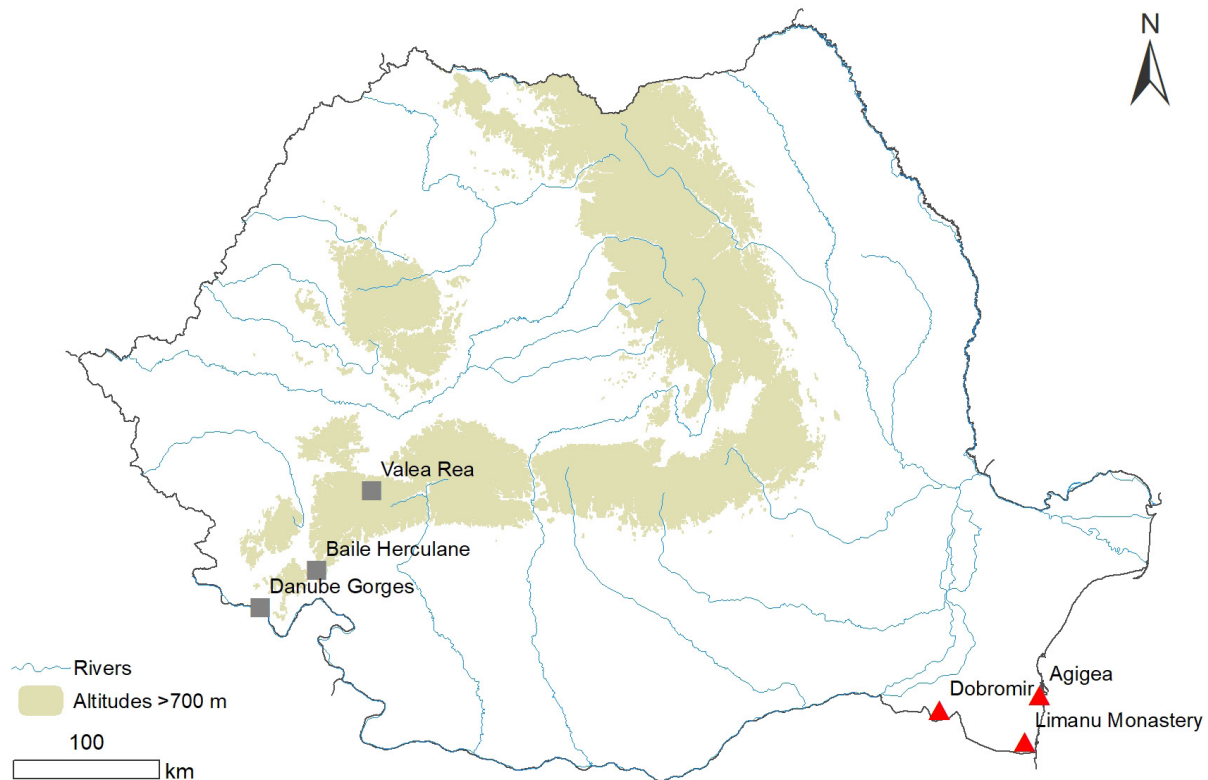


Fig. 3. Records of *Utetheisa pulchella* in Romania. Grey squares: 19th century record; red triangles: current record from southern Dobrogea (Constanța county).

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